

## **Sun-Earth Day Highlights (1-26-08)**

### **Polar Gateways Arctic Circle Sunrise 2008**

### **Barrow, Alaska, January 23-29, 2008**

**[Troy Cline]**

"We shall not cease from Exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started, and to know the place for the first time. (T.S. Eliot)

My name is Troy Cline and welcome to another Sun-Earth Day Highlights podcast. In our last episode we heard from representatives of the Barrow Community who spoke at the Polar Sunrise Arctic Circle conference just hours before the Polar Sunrise on January 23rd.

In this episode we'll learn more about the community of Barrow and visit one of the historic hotspots, Brower's Café. You can view all of the images that were taken during that experience on the supporting Sun-Earth Day podcast page.

But before we take our trip to the Café, I have to share a brief experience I just had. While working on these podcasts at my temporary desk here in Barrow, I couldn't help but to over hear a rather excited conversation taking place just outside my door. Of course I had to check it out and I'm really glad I did. One of the drivers was telling everyone about a little seal who had apparently lost his way in downtown Barrow. Listen in!

**[SEAL]**

My name is Michael Donovan born and raised in Barrow. Yeah we just got a report that there is a breaded seal, not a bearded seal but a spotted seal running around in town –Oh Wow- spotted in town, actually from the road and across the road, up by the locals houses and running around in the snow

**[Troy Cline]**

What happens now, is it okay to be running around or do you...

**[SEAL]**

Yeah, it is probably lost due to the blizzard, probably came out of its hole and lost its hole, then the blizzard and the snow storm what it is its looking for water just traveled around and totally lost off the ice into town. And they maneuver pretty good in the snow. I was surprised like a couple months ago we found one out by the gate keeper's snow fence. I was pretty surprised it would actually swim in the snow, --Really--Yeah it used the snow like water and just swim. Yeah its pretty amazing to see the seals running inland on the tundra.

**[Troy Cline]**

Yes it is. Is somebody going to go out and try to help it in some way right now? I think you mentioned something about that.

**[SEAL]**

Yeah the Natural Burrow Wild Life Department here will try to go get it and they'll either take it here or to the lab to check it out to see if it's hurt or anything like that, bleeding from any point. But what they'll do is bring it back to the ocean and let it go. Help it back home.

**[Troy Cline]**

Now that's a story that could only happen in a place like Barrow, Alaska. With that story in mind, let's go ahead and take our trip to Brower's Café. Our tour guide is Laura Thomas, the Field and Lab Director for the Nuvuk Archaeology Project with BASC or the Barrow Arctic Science Consortium. The temperature that day was around -20 degrees Fahrenheit with a brisk wind coming off of the Arctic Ocean a few hundred yards away. Since this interview took place on location you'll hear quite a bit of sound in the background including wind, the engine of our warm, warm truck just a few feet way and, if you listen really close, you just might hear my teeth chattering!

Well thank you it is an honor to be here with you today.

**[Laura Thomas]**

It's a little chilly to be out here you might hear the car running in the background. We keep cars running all the time up here at this temperature.

**[Troy Cline]**

So you are gracious enough to drive us around in Barrow right now to some of the historic sight that are in the town. Can you tell us where are we standing right now.?

**[Laura Thomas]**

We are standing in an area referred to as the Simons Hill complex and when we talk about hill here in Barrow, we're talking about a 4 meter rise in elevation, so it's not dramatic but it is for the coastal tundra area. And where we're standing this area right here, the first international polar year back in 1881-1882, this is the area where Lieutenant Ray set up the refuge station, the scientific monitoring station, the buildings. And what we have here right now, the buildings that are actually here, looking off to my right is what is now Brower's Café and you can go inside and get a hamburger or Korean food and it's a white building, it's probably about 5 meters long by about 10 meters wide, and it's kind of, colonial, I would say colonial Yankee whaling style.

**[Troy Cline]**

I think that's a great description of it; it's a white clapboard building.

**[Laura Thomas]**

Yeah, the wood of course, we have no trees in Barrow so all of the building material is shipped in from the outside. In this case the materials were shipped in from Seattle on probably the North Star when it came up. Anyway, looking at this building we can see, in the summer time you can see a little bit better, it's had some modifications to the building; the great thing about buildings in the Arctic is they're very portable and very movable because they're up on pilings. Of course they need to be up on pilings because of the permafrost. If you put a building right on the surface of the ground it will cause melt and the building to sink, so buildings in Barrow are always on pilings so this allows people to move buildings a lot more easily a lot more easily than you would in areas without permafrost. This building that we are looking at here it currently functions as a restaurant and the inside, its been remodeled on the inside, the floor plan is fairly similar to the way it would be back during the first International Polar Year, following the International Polar Year, local, well he is a celebrity in Barrow now, Charles D. Brower, came up from the south and developed the Cape Smythe Whaling and Trading Post, Trading Company. So after the 1881 the original scientific IPY use this building became a general store and trading company. And you can actually see there is a second story to the building it's all boarded up right now but some of Charles D's sons lived up there and said the walls actually had caribou for installation. It's not the regular pink foam stuff you have for installation. But the thing that we have to keep in mind in Barrow again, the materials have to come from far away and people use them again, again and again. So in 1963, we're jumping around here a lot in time, in 1963 there was a huge, huge flood. The ocean had a big storm, the water actually, from where we are standing the water actually continued about 2 kilometers inland. And so this whole area was flooded and the west facing side of this building, Brower's café was actually torn off. As a result of that all of the buildings are in their original vicinity, but not in their original location. They have kind of been moved around quite a bit. If you look actually at historic photos of the building I'm talking about Brower's Café, you'll see as we walk a little further to the west here, probably 100 meters to the north we see a kind of similar style construction, the clapboard style building, the wood in this case though is graying its unpainted. This very much looks like a shed you might see pretty much anywhere in New England, in the 1880's, and this was an outbuilding or part of the 1881 complex of buildings. The qanitchat or the arctic entrance the front part in the south we call mudroom. The qanitchat to the building is actually the qanitchat from the Brower's café. So this is just an example just to show you can visually see the qanitchat is white the building is gray behind it. They are the same style constructually you can see, they weren't built to be together. But people are always moving things around and recycling buildings. Just to the east of it about 10 meters to the east of it there's another building that looks similar to the gray building. You can see it has the distinctive kind of diagonal double entry way that swings out very much like a barn style, both of these buildings are related to 1881 buildings, in fact the one on the left, the qanitchat, may actually be the 1881 science monitor building. We have line drawings, color pictures, as well as some photographs of the building they show a wind wane coming up and a flag as well as a mount for a machine gun. Of

course this is the military 1881. To make sure there was no insurgency or resistance from the local Inupiat population. Decided to bring a little muscle to flex their arm as it will. So we are looking at the northwest if we look to the southeast over this way we see a complex of buildings and homes. The main one we see in the foreground is pink color with a black strip running across it, with a bunch of windows it has a very similar construction style, the New England style to it. But if you look closely the although it was painted on the outside with optimal colors if you look closely the additions have kinda of been added together probably the middle section to this relates to the original Brower residence. Which, as I said Charles D Brower's began the Cape Smythe Whaling Company. But again it is very difficult to tell. There were three houses here Charles D Brower brought in three houses from Seattle. He built them for his umialik or whaling captains. He was subsidizing three whaling crews or had three whaling crews working for him. He would sell the baleen, etc. At any rate these three houses are no longer here. They have been towed, one has been towed as far away as Alaktak, which is also known as Half Moon Three which is about 72 meters inland in the coast. You can only get there by boat so they actually brought this pre-built house down there. So Half Moon Three is interesting as well because as well as having the Cape Smythe Whaling Company, Charles D Brower had a reindeer ranch. The reindeer herd or something, he had a coral with reindeer down in Alaktak.

### **Troy Cline]**

Now can you tell what this is directly in front just to the left of the buildings you were describing—It's an arch!

### **[Laura Thomas]**

This is the Barrow Kodak moment. This is where the tour bus pulls up. The arches were put up in 1980 or 81 by some of Charles D Brower's sons. Charles D actually died in 1945 or 46 I believe. So it was put up as a memorial for Charles D Brower but also what we are looking at the arches are the forward jaw bone of the bull head whale. Bull heads are baleen whales they don't have teeth they have and ----- and weights. As you can see they are black, kinda shiny, like vinyl records. The bull has used the baleen to siphon off the plankton. They take in huge gulps of water and siphon out the water and keep the plankton. So what we are looking at is two lower jaw bones kinda set on end forming an arch. There a smaller juvenile bull head whale skull that look out onto the tech TC. Just below the arch and on the right and left are wood and bone of a skeleton or the ribbing material for uniacke. Uniackes are open boats you can image a big canoe, their large open boats . Their frames are covered with breaded seal skin. These boats are used to go hunting whale in the springtime, still today in Barrow.

You can learn more about the Community of Barrow by visiting the BASC website at <http://www.arcticsscience.org/> . When you get to the site simply click on the 'About Barrow' link. In that section you can read about the population, economy, education and quality of life.

In upcoming podcasts we'll take you on an Audio Voyage of Barrow as experienced by Dorian Janney, a visiting middle school teacher from Parkland Magnet Middle School in Rockville, Maryland. You will also hear interviews conducted by high school student, Kara Mayo. Kara's spent quite a bit of time talking with cultural representatives of Barrow and scientists who attended the Arctic Circle Polar Sunrise conference. She also interviewed Elaine Lewis from NASA's Sun-Earth Connection Education Forum about her visits to a variety of schools in and around Barrow during the conference.

And remember that in just a few weeks you'll be able to access a special webpage on the Sun-Earth Day website complete with science video clips and images taken directly from the Polar Gateways conference.

I hope you enjoyed this edition of Sun-Earth Day Highlights. We are very interested in hearing your questions and comments about the Sun-Earth Day podcasts. If you have something to say, send an email to [sunearthdaypodcast@mail630.gsfc.nasa.gov](mailto:sunearthdaypodcast@mail630.gsfc.nasa.gov) .

For all other details about the Sun-Earth Day program including information about our past SED themes be sure to visit our website at [sunearthday.nasa.gov](http://sunearthday.nasa.gov).

While there, don't forget to register in order to receive Sun-Earth Day updates!